

REMARKS

The present office action has been received and considered. In this response, Claims 23, 26, 30 and 34 were amended and Claim 37 was canceled. Support for the amendments may be found in the specification and drawings as originally filed. Reconsideration of the outstanding rejections in the present application is respectfully requested based on the following remarks.

Applicant respectfully asserts that it was unwarranted for the Examiner to issue a Final Office Action immediately after the filing of a Request for Continued Examination (RCE). Applicant had presented new claims, not the claims that appeared in the previous responses in which *Blaurock* was cited.

More specifically, the Examiner did not address all of the unique features that appeared in the new claims. For example, Claim 29 and now canceled Claim 37 (the language of which appears in Claim 30) clearly distinguish *Blaurock* by stating that “the second axial end of the body is formed at the body diameter and is a free and unobstructed end of the body.” In contrast, *Blaurock*’s FIG. 7 clearly shows two axial ends 138, 140 that both flare radially outward. *Blaurock*’s ends 138, 140 are not formed at its body diameter and do not satisfy these claims.

In addition, Claims 26 and 34 recite that “all of the protrusions extend radially outward from the body.” The Examiner stated that these positive limitations were not enough, and that negative limitations must be added to make up for these deficiencies. Accordingly, Applicant has amended Claims 20 and 34 to further clarify that “there are no protrusions that extend radially inward from the body.”

Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in condition for allowance, and an early indication of the same is courteously solicited. The Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned by telephone to expedite resolution of any issues and passage of the present application to issue.

Applicant believes no additional fees are due. If the Commissioner believes additional fees are due, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any fees or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account Number 50-5475.

Respectfully submitted,

/Michael E. Noe, Jr./

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